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## It's a golden year

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Planners and builders of the Garrison Dam had a vision for the peninsula 3 miles south of Garrison decades before Fort Stevenson State Park became a Lake Sakakawea “go-to” destination.

It wasn't anticipated to become a state park. Nor was it envisioned to lead in visitation numbers among all 14 N.D. Parks and Recreation Department state parks.

Instead, engineers of the massive project, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, selected the site for recreational development because of two important attributes – good lake access and its relatively flat terrain. That topography allowed for easier campground development, with amenities including a picnic area, boat ramp, comfort station and sewage system.

The Corps also planted trees to mitigate for flooded river bottomland timber.

The early recreation area was managed by a concessionaire until the N.D. Parks and Recreation Department acquired a long-term lease. Fort Stevenson officially opened as a state park in 1974, growing from its humble beginnings to become a year-round destination.

The park celebrates its golden anniversary in 2024, not just over one summer weekend, but throughout the year, perhaps in recognition of truly being a place for people regardless of the season.

Early state park planners envisioned campground expansions, marina and day use facilities. Other amenities arrived over time, including a second marina, cabins, an enhanced trail system and more trees, native grasses and forbs. Improved amenities coupled with Lake Sakakawea's renowned fishing and recreational opportunities helped attract visitors.

The park's repertoire of events and activities grew under the leadership of now retired park manager, Dick Messerly. While Fort Stevenson was a summer destination and North Dakota Governor's Cup Fishing Derby host, Messerly led efforts introducing even more people to the area, working with community volunteers



*A family enjoys a summer day's hike along Fort Stevenson State Park's deTrobiand Trail.*

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*Cannon firing is just part of the activities and demonstrations at Fort Stevenson State Park's annual Frontier Military Days each June.*

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and area business leaders.

For example, the Fort Stevenson Guardhouse Interpretive Center became a reality through the Fort Stevenson Foundation's volunteer efforts. It's complemented by Frontier Military Days, a summer weekend celebrating the region's rich history.

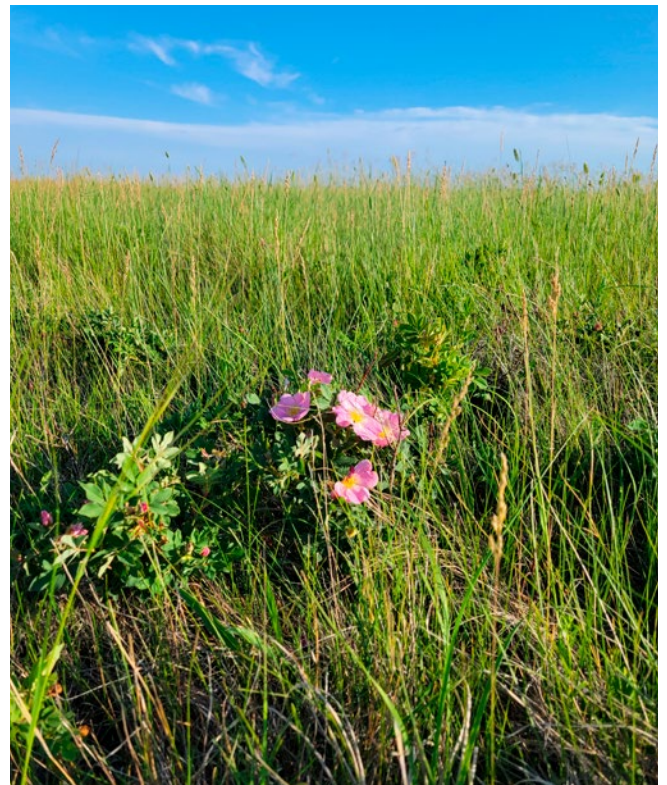
Nighttime hikes are held throughout the year, even in winter when luminaries light park trails to guide hikers, snowshoers or cross-country skiers, depending on snow conditions. An August hike awakens one's senses to owls and other creatures' late-night activities.

As Fort Stevenson State Park grew with increased fishing, camping and a wide array of diverse activities, so did the park's visitation, amenities and electrical needs.

Last year, the park topped the 200,000 visitation mark – 201,930 to be precise – the first for any state park, described Fort Stevenson State Park Manager Chad Trautman.

Trautman is hard-pressed to put a number on a possible goal for visitation numbers. He admits he's borrowing a quote from Messerly when contemplating any type of goal: "I'll steal it from him. ... I would like every North Dakotan to experience Fort Stevenson," Trautman suggested.

Last year, North Dakotans accounted for about 64% of



*North Dakota's state flower, the prairie rose, is one of many native grasses and flowers visitors might find along Fort Stevenson State Park's Purple Coneflower Trail.*

Fort Stevenson's visitation.

McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) provides the park's electricity, helping enable its growth. Its services in the park grew as the park grew. The small city of campers is a large summer electrical load, described MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle.

As the number of campsites grew right along with the size of campers and amenities on boats and pontoons, campsite electrical hookups grew from 10 or 15 amps to 30 amps.

Nowadays, 50-amp hookups are standard, Doyle added.

In 2022 and 2023 alone, MEC provided three new service upgrades in the park, described McLean Electric Operations Manager Keith Thelen, converting two single-phase lines to three-phase and upgrading an

existing single-phase line, all with the goal of meeting future electrical needs.

The park upgraded its lift station, so MEC also upgraded a 100-amp single-phase line serving the lift station to 200-amp three-phase in 2023, he continued. The upgrades help ensure the park's electrical needs are in place to accommodate its anniversary event, he concluded.

As Trautman, staff and park visitors look back at its history and celebrate its golden anniversary, it might be difficult to look ahead and envision what the future brings. The focus and goal for Fort Stevenson has always been maintaining its natural outdoor experience, such as the lake, nature areas, dog park and trails, Trautman explained. The task is balancing the interest and growth while maintaining that natural setting. ■

## Park intends to set s'mores record

Fort Stevenson State Park Manager Chad Trautman admits state parks typically celebrate monumental events, such as a 50th or 75th anniversary, with a summer weekend of activities.

But not at Fort Stevenson.

In keeping with its year-round litany of activities, it seemed only appropriate the park celebrate its 2024 50th anniversary with a year-round commemoration, expanding on some events and adding others.

In keeping with being a record-setter in terms of visitation, it may be appropriate one event in 2024 strives to best the Guinness World Records. In this case, it's the most people simultaneously making s'mores in one location.

After all, s'mores, camping, campfires and Fort Stevenson State Park just seem to go together. Trautman is confident the park and its visitors will break the current record of 891 people making s'mores at a Texas state park in 2023.

An actual Guinness World Records judge will be present, Trautman described. Plans call for the event to be held in an open field adjacent to the park's west camp loop.

Rules are specific, Trautman continued. It has to be in one location, not spread throughout the park, so the judge can verify the exact number of s'mores makers. Standard-sized marshmallows are required, as are graham crackers. Plus, it has to be milk chocolate candy bars.

And they all have to be made at the same time.

Trautman and his staff aren't content in hoping they can get 892 participants.

Or even 900.

Nope, they have higher aspirations: "We're planning for 1,000," he said.

It's easy to be part of the record-breaking attempt on May 18: Start arriving between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. S'more making begins at 3 p.m. and a victory celebration complete with entertainment runs from 4 to 6 p.m.

Another anniversary and potential annual event is the June 22 Children's Stick Horse Rodeo at the Fort Stevenson Guardhouse Interpretive Center grounds.

Participants get to keep their stick horse, cowboy hat and bandana, participating in rodeo events such as bull riding.

"Because we'll have a stick horse bull," Trautman described. Barrel racing, pig herding (pink beach balls with painted piglet faces) and other rodeo events are also planned.

No rodeo is complete without a rodeo clown and this special rodeo will have a real-life rodeo clown from Devils Lake, Trautman added. Plans call for Miss Rodeo North Dakota to attend as well.

Lunch is another rodeo staple, with participants treated to hot dogs and root beer floats.

McLean Electric Cooperative and Basin Electric Power Cooperative are proud to be two of the several area businesses supporting both events.

Other events added to the park's anniversary

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celebration docket include expanding the Club de Skinautique Water Ski Show to include three food trucks, morning regatta and live music Aug. 3

While a nighttime lantern hike will be Aug. 31, park interpreters are giving paper lanterns at amphitheater presentations throughout the summer for the audience to decorate. People with luminaries and battery or paper lanterns can gather at the Visitor Center on Aug. 31, Trautman described, with the hike taking participants to Prairie Dog Town, along the park's perimeter and back to the Visitor Center.

The Sept. 21 Oktober Family Fest has a traditional German Oktoberfest atmosphere, complete with a polka band, Trautman continued. It's a family event with activities – even axe throwing.

“We'll also have some German trivia going on, a German food truck, and, of course, there will be chicken dances,” he said with a smile.

The anniversary celebration culminates Dec. 21 after park staff decorate campsites with Christmas displays.

“We want to have that lighted experience. We are looking at having fireworks, too,” Trautman said.

None of the events, the park's growth and its role as one of the leaders in area recreational opportunities is possible alone.

“It's a tribute to the park, its staff, area residents, local businesses, people throughout the region and the people that came before us,” Trautman said. “It's community.”

And it's worth celebrating.

Fort Stevenson's remaining 2024 golden anniversary events:

- May 4 – Evening Hike Series: Full Flower Moon Hike
- May 18 – S'mores Guinness World Records attempt
- May 25 – Emergency Medical Services Kids Event

- May 25 through 27 – Sky Fest over Fort Stevenson Kite Festival
- June 1 – National Trails Day/Veterans Hike and Military Appreciation Day
- June 8 – National Marina Day
- June 22-23 – Frontier Military Days and Stick Horse Rodeo
- July 19-20 – North Dakota Governor's Cup Fishing Derby
- July 2 – Junior North Dakota Governor's Cup Fishing Derby
- Aug. 30 – 50th anniversary celebration with regatta, Club de Skinautique Water Ski Show, boat parade and live music
- Aug. 17 – Evening hike series: Sensory hike
- Aug. 31 – Evening hike series: Lanterns hike
- Sept. 21 – Oktober Family Fest
- Oct. 26 – Evening hike series: Halloween hike
- Nov. 29, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13 – Dickens Ornament Exchange Geocache
- Dec. 21 – Year-end celebration ■



*Bottineau's Club de Skinautique Water Ski Show is a hit among attendees at the annual ski show held in Garrison Bay each year.*

## Park growth spurs co-op growth

Fort Stevenson State Park does more than provide recreational opportunities in the region.

Its presence adds to the quality of life for residents throughout the region, described McLean Electric Cooperative (MEC) General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle. Its year-round array of activities, events and outdoor opportunities draws people to the area, providing an economic boost to area businesses.

In addition, the park's growth expands infrastructure in outlying areas, allowing for rural residential growth throughout MEC's service area along the lake.

“That adds to the allure of the lake, having that infrastructure within close proximity,” Doyle continued. Even if residential property isn't adjacent to Lake Sakakawea, having access and amenities within a few miles draws people to the park and region as a whole.

Fort Stevenson's presence grows MEC's demand, which, in turn, grows MEC's system.

“The success of that state park enhances the infrastructure, which spurs park enhances the residential growth,” he added. ■

# Light up the night

BY PATRICIA STOCKDILL

Solar lights now dance high atop trees in Washburn's Riverside Park and from its historic Sioux Ferry, in part because of one of the basic principles guiding electric cooperative philosophies: commitment to community.

McLean Electric Cooperative's (MEC) ~~Turtle Lake~~ line crew looped multiple solar lights among lonely, barren tree branches and the ferry as part of a project sponsored by the Washburn Area Improvement Association, Washburn Life.

The goal is to brighten long winter nighttime skies, enabling people to more safely – and cheerfully – enjoy an early morning or evening walk along its trails nestling the Missouri River. Washburn Life board member Rachel Retterath said people living across the Missouri River from the park have even commented how much they appreciate the lighting display.

Commitment to community is one of seven basic principles guiding many cooperatives across the United States, described MEC General Manager/CEO Mark Doyle.

"The opportunity presented McLean Electric to show our support for community, this project scope is wellness. It will bring a little light into the lives (of area residents)," he added. "We want to participate in community betterment projects."

Four MEC lineworkers working in two bucket trucks allowed the solar strings to reach higher into the branches.

The cooperative's donation was a major contribution to the project's success, and Retterath is eager to see them from a riverside view on the water on a late summer evening.

The lights provide more visibility for those seeking to enjoy a winter outdoor walk along with improved safety. It can be a step to better health and wellness, as well.

Washburn Life members, in partnership with the Washburn park board, researched the types of lighting necessary to withstand a North Dakota winter, Retterath continued. The project involved about 4,000 to 5,000 lights when totally completed.

MEC is proud to give back to the broad community that encompasses its member-owners, Doyle said. Service – as in electrical service – is what electric cooperatives do and that philosophy of service extends to the larger sense of community. At the same time, the cooperative balances



*McLean Electric Cooperative lineworkers string solar lights among the tree branches to help brighten area trails.*

its fiduciary responsibility to its member-owners, which is considered when participating in community programs and projects, Doyle added.

While health, wellness and safety are important to people's lives, they can be especially important in the long, dark North Dakota winter months.

Light Up Washburn is one way to brighten the night. ■





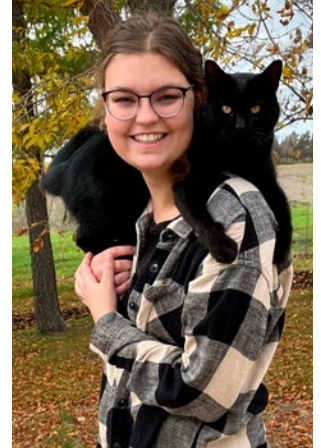
**Alyssa Haakenson**



**Mara Krzmarzick**



**Justis Klabunde**



**Neela Sand**

## Scholarship and Youth Tour winners announced

### **BASIN ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP**

Basin Electric Power Cooperative provides two \$500 scholarships to McLean Electric Cooperative to be awarded to two qualified candidates. These scholarships were awarded based on academic excellence, which includes the following criteria: ACT scores, work experience and participation in school and community activities. Recipients include:

#### **Alyssa Haakenson**

Alyssa is the daughter of Steven and Anita of Parshall and will graduate from Parshall High School. She will be attending Valley City State University, pursuing a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She is active in golf, basketball, track, cross-country, FFA, chess club and National Honor Society and is an honors student.

#### **Mara Krzmarzick**

Mara will graduate from Garrison High School and is the daughter of Karen and Jim Krzmarzick of Garrison. She will be attending the University of Mary pursuing a bachelor's degree in radiologic technology. She is active in volleyball, band, student government, is an honors student, and volunteers at church and the food pantry.

### **MCLEAN ELECTRIC SCHOLARSHIP**

Each entry had to include a short statement for an essay question to be eligible for the \$500 scholarship. This year's essay question was: "What challenges face rural electric cooperatives in the coming years and how do you think the challenges should be addressed?" Justis Klabunde won the \$500 scholarship with his essay response.

#### **Justis Klabunde**

Justis will graduate from Garrison High School and is the son of Robyn and Sheila Klabunde. He will be attending Bismarck State College to pursue a career as a plumber. He plans on utilizing his degree to return to the community and work for Steve's Plumbing and farm with his dad.

### **YOUTH TOUR WINNER**

Neela Sand is a junior and is the daughter of Darrin and Serena Sand of Garrison. She has been selected to represent McLean Electric Cooperative on the all-expense-paid 2024 Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., this June.

During the weeklong tour, Neela and other students from across North Dakota will tour sites, monuments, attractions and congressional offices. They will learn about electric cooperatives and discuss issues facing their community and nation. ■



## McLean County community calendar:

# Events and activities to see and do

### McLean County area food pantry May and June distribution dates, times and locations:

- **Community Cupboard of Underwood food distribution:** 10 a.m.-noon May 11, 4-6 p.m. May 30, June 13 and June 27, 208 Lincoln Ave. Like us on Facebook, Community Cupboard of Underwood, for food pantry distributions, thrift store and other information.
- **Community Food Pantry serving Ryder, Makoti, Roseglen, Plaza, White Shield, Parshall and those in need:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. May 25 and June 22, 181 Ellsworth, Makoti.
- **Community Thrift Store serving the communities of Ryder, Makoti, Roseglen, Plaza, White Shield, Parshall and the region:** 181 Ellsworth, Makoti. Store hours: 3-6 p.m. Tuesday, 4-7 p.m. Thursday and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, except holidays.
- **Free Community Clothing Share & Exchange Store:** Noon-6 p.m. every Thursday, 221 Main St., Turtle Lake.
- **Garrison Area Resource Center & Food Pantry, Garrison:** Noon-2 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. May 23 and June 27, Garrison.
- **McLean Family Resource Center:** McLean County residents can contact the center, 701-462-8643, for an appointment to pick up baskets along with more information or assistance through the center's services, 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **McLean Family Resource Center Clothing Outlet:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. first Saturday of every month, 205 Seventh St., Washburn.
- **Our Savior Lord's Food Pantry, Max:** Noon-3 p.m. and 5-7 p.m. May 20 and June 17, City Hall, 215 Main St., Max.
- **The Lord's Pantry, Turtle Lake:** 2-4 p.m. May 9 and June 13, 10 a.m.-noon May 25 and June 22, Trinity Lutheran Church, 515 Kundert St., Turtle Lake.
- **Wilton Food Pantry, Wilton:** "Mini" distributions every Friday, 11:30 a.m. until gone. Full food distribution, 4-6 p.m. May 16 and June 20, Senior Citizens Center, 42 Dakota Ave., Wilton.

The McLean Family Resource Center is sponsoring Greater Access for Groceries throughout April, providing free gas cards to help pay travel expenses to pick up food baskets during the month. Contact the center at 701-462-8643 for more Greater Access for Groceries information and to schedule an appointment to get the food basket.

### May and June events:

- **Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery Memorial Day through Labor Day hours:** 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays. Free admission.
- **May 4:** BikeFest, 8:30 a.m., children's activities, lunch and prizes, Rexall Drug, Turtle Lake.
- **May 4:** Spring Fling Vendor Show, Memorial Hall, Wilton.
- **May 4:** Full Flower Moon Hike in Evening Hike Series, 9:30

p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.

- **May 4-13:** Celebration Migratory Bird Week at Audubon National Wildlife Refuge with a hike on the self-guided interpretive trail and playing the digital migration game.
- **May 5:** Turtle Lake Hospital Auxiliary Salad and Sandwich Luncheon fundraiser, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Turtle Lake-Mercer High School gym, Turtle Lake.
- **May 11:** Hot Rods at the Hatchery Invitational Car Show, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery.
- **May 17-18:** Citywide rummage sales, Washburn.
- **May 18:** S'mores Guinness World Records attempt, 2 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **May 25:** EMS Kid Strong Event, 4 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **May 25:** Hatchery Fun Day family activities, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery.
- **May 25-May 27:** Sky Fest over Fort Stevenson Kite Festival, 10 a.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **May 31-June 2:** Riverboat Days, Washburn.
- **June 1:** National Trails Day Hike, 2 p.m.
- **June 3-4:** McLean Family Resource Center sidewalk sales, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., proceeds benefiting center programs, at the facility, Washburn.
- **June 8:** National Marina Day, 1 p.m., Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **June 14-15:** Citywide rummage sales, Underwood.
- **June 14-16:** McLean County Fair, Underwood.
- **June 15:** Prairie Lake Festival, 11 a.m., quilt and craft auction, food and bake sale, Camp of the Cross, Douglas Bay on Lake Sakakawea.
- **June 16:** Garrison Fire Department Fly-in Father's Day Breakfast with freewill donation, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Garrison Airport.
- **June 18:** McLean Electric Cooperative annual meeting, registration and meal 5-6:30 p.m., business meeting at 6:30 p.m., headquarters, Garrison.
- **June 20:** Blue Goose Day, registration begins at 5 p.m., free children's outdoor activities, Audubon National Wildlife Refuge.
- **June 22-23:** Frontier Military Days and Stick Horse Rodeo, noon, Fort Stevenson State Park, Garrison.
- **June 29:** Midsummer Car Classic, Underwood.

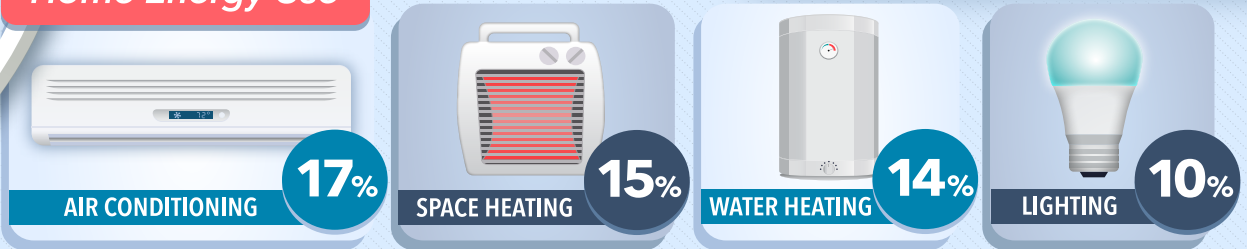
Nonprofit organizations and communities throughout McLean County are encouraged to contact Patricia Stockdill, stockdill.patricia@gmail.com, or telephone 701-337-5462, to submit community events. ■

# CONNECTED to SAFETY

## Making your Home Safe and Efficient

Whether you're **working** from home, **learning** from home or just **spending more time** at home, it is important to make sure your home is electrically safe, secure and efficient. Learn how the **internet of things** and **smart devices** can improve your quality of life and **make your home safer**.

### Home Energy Use



AVERAGE YEARLY ENERGY USE BY ITEM \*source: U.S. Energy Information Administration

### Energy Efficiency Through Smart Devices

Smart refrigerators to **optimize temperature**

Optimize wash/dry times for **lowest energy costs**

Automated HVAC controls

Automated lighting

Remote / automated outlet controls

### Prepare your Home for Safe and Efficient Energy Use

Use a **smart plug** or **power strip** to turn off power when devices are not in use

LED light bulbs last longer than traditional bulbs and use 25-80% less energy

Heat only the area you're in with **energy-efficient space heaters**

Utilize **home automation** to control HVAC and lighting systems while not at home

Have an electrician **inspect your electrical system** every 10 years to avoid overloads

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